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THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS



By
HARRIET MONROE



To Marion Q. Lewis
and

Edward T. Parsons,

from their friend
and fellow hiker
of the Sierra Club,

Harriet Monroe

(who must climb Ramassus,
because she can't get to
the top of Whitney.)

Chicago:

Jan. 27th, 1912

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

By HARRIET MONROE

Designs by
WILL H.
BRADLEY



CHICAGO
RALPH FLETCHER SEYMOUR CO.
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GIFT

Mrs. Marion Randall Parsons

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Fortnightly Review, in which the poem first appeared
in May, 1908*

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To K. McD. H.

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THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

I—SPRING

Allegro

Wake! wake!

Out of the snow and the mist,
In rain-wet, wind-blown gauze
Of amber and amethyst
Cometh Spring like a girl.
Trembling and timorous
She peers through the thin white thaws,
Afraid of the winds that whirl
Down paths all perilous
Where her so tender feet are softly going,
Where the rich earth awaiteth her lavish
sowing
Of green and purple and white
In the gardens of day and night.

Hither she cometh—

Behold her, the wraith so frail!
The chill gray storm benumbeth
Her delicate fingers pale,
And looseth her hair from its fillet of pearl.

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

Her soft dew-frosted eyes—
The virginal eyes of a girl—
Gaze at the foam-veiled skies,
Search for the sun who hideth
His amorous glowing face,
For the spirit of life that glideth
Unseen through every place.

Blown! blown—
Hither and yon,
Dashed by the winds that groan,
Lashed by the frost-elves wan,
Whipped by the envious ghosts of old years
 long gone,
That chatter and sigh
Of the ruin nigh,
Of death and darkness and sorrow that come
 anon.
Yet bold and brave
She dares—the young Spring—to dance on
 that ancient grave,
To dance with delicate feet
On the world's despair and defeat,
On the Winter that covereth all
With an ashen pall.

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

Lo, she lifts the cover—
A corner of that icy pall she lifts.
Lo earth, great-hearted lover,
Smiles upward through the dew-bespangled
 rifts.
And shining sunbeams, pages of the day,
Roll up the mantle, bear it far away.
Then the earth laughs with pleasure,
And tosses from her treasure
Store of blue crocuses and snow-drops white,
Glad trilliums that make the woodland
 bright,
Rich arbutus and shadowy violets;
Till, caught in webs of bloom,
Light-footed Spring her stormy woe forgets,
Forgets the cold, the gloom,
Blesses with errant grace
Each dim forgotten place,
Casts on the oak its rosy velvet dress
Of drooping leaves, muffles the maples bare
In lilac veils, covers with tenderness
The harsh brown world; and then, when all is
 won,
Trails languorous dreams, dreams exquisite
 and rare,

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

And shrinking from the bold, too fervid sun,
She giveth over
Her royal lover
Like one afraid of love, who will not stay
Love's perfect day.
She giveth over—
Inconstant rover—
Her glad green garlanded world, and like
the dew
Sleeps in the blue.
She tosseth down
Her flowery crown
Into the lap of Summer—
Glad newcomer!—
Smiling adorns her with treasure of growing
things
And softly sings,
The while she fades in light—
A wraith, a mist
Of amethyst;
A spirit, a dream that goeth,
But whither—who knoweth?

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

II—SUMMER

Andante

Hush! hush!

Wake not the drowsy Summer—she would
dream,

Heavy with growing things.

Dance lightly where her beauty lies a-gleam
'Neath languidly folded wings.

Over the delicate grasses

A breath, a spirit passes,

A song, and the odor of bloom—

Give way! make room!

The Summer hath met her lover

By day, by night;

He hath brought from the stars—bright
rover!—

Heaven's fire, heaven's light!

He hath filled her with life that sleepeth,

That waits for birth,

As a jewel its secret keepeth

In the rock-bound earth.

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

Softly, slowly
Dance and sway,
While Summer dreameth
The moons away.
Full weary she seemeth
Of love's deep bliss,
But holy, holy
Love's memories.

The idle day is rich with budding
things
Whereon the bold sun glares.
Dance lightly, lest thou tread on folded
wings,
Of flight still unawares.
Ah, delicate thy foot-fall be, while ever
The seed grows in the corn,
The bird in the egg, the deed in the endeavor,
The day in the morn.
Deep in the pool the spawning fishes play;
High in the air the bees buzz out their way.
Everywhere
The children of Summer come crowding in
lustrous array—
The myriad children of Summer, beloved of
the sun;

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

Through the long hot noons they are glad of
the world they have won.

Bright and fair

They throng in the meadows and shake out
the dew from their hair;

They sing in the tree-tops, they dip in the
slow-flowing stream;

They nod from the hills, in the valleys their
swift feet gleam;

They kneel in the moon-light, the bright stars
hear their prayer.

Everywhere

The high sun blesses them,

The moon confesses them,

Old Time with patient smile

Harks to their hope awhile.

They are born, they awake, their arise—yea,
they dance in their bloom;

For their revels of love and of wonder the
earth makes room.

Yea, she harketh their song for a season, she
kisseth their feet;

She giveth her all for their hour—be its joy
complete.

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

The fecund Summer then
Veileth her eyes again—
Dreameth, at rest.
Young mother of life who feedeth
The world at her breast;
Rich bride of the year, who needeth
But love and light
To give, and give more, and give all
In her great love's might.
Tread softly, give heed to her call—
Oh be still! be fleet!
Hush—hush the sweet sound of thy singing;
Pause—pause, ye feet!
Sink down! she bids thee rest
Close on her breast.
Down! down! thy rapture flinging
Where all her dreams are winging.
Ah, cease thy quest!
Peace!—be blest!
Be blest!

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

III—AUTUMN

Scherzo

Come with me—

All that live!

Dance with me—

Love—and give!

Give me your love, ye souls of the corn and
the vine!

Dance with me! laugh with me! crowd me!
be mine—be mine!

Up from the earth in your splendor of scarlet
and gold—

Haste, oh make haste ere the warm rich year
grow old!

Ye throngs that gaily rise

Multitudinous

As the red, red leaves that flutter

All tremulous

When the wind rides down from the skies;

Ye spirits that shout and mutter

In laughter, in pain,

When the year of her sowing and reaping

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

Would waste again,
Come, spend of your treasure, full heaping,
Be lavish, be bold!
Cast your hope on the winds, from your feet
shake the dark damp mold;
Come dancing, come shouting, come leaping,
Ere the earth grow cold!

Come, ye wings of the air; come, ye
feet that trample the grasses!
Come, ye tree-top spirits that kindle the
leaves to flame!
Come, sprites of the sea that shout when the
gray storm passes!
Come, wraiths of the desert whom sorrow nor
death may tame!
Come eat of the rich ripe fruit, come drink of
the vine!
Come dance till your revels are drunken with
joy, with wine.
For the labor is over and done,
The spoil of the battle is won!
Ah trample it, scatter it,
Cast it afar!
The tempests will batter it—
On with the war!

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

Let your bright robes float, let them whirl
 with the rush of your feet—
The gauzes of crimson and gold!
Give your will to the winds—they are chasing,
 they haste, they are fleet;
They are eager and ruthless and bold.
On! on! till ye circle the earth with the rush
 of your dancing,
With the shout and the song;
Till your choral of crowds, like a river in
 flood-time advancing,
Bears all things along!
Dance! dance! for the end comes soon—
Do ye feel the chill?
White winds of the Winter croon
From their cave in the hill.
Yea, death and the end come soon—
Spread your gaudy robes!
Haste! haste! for the leaves are falling.
Shout! shout! for the storms are calling.
Give all, ere the year grow old,
Ere the world grow cold.

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

IV—WINTER

Finale

Fly! fly!

Gather your white robes close—

Scuttle away!

Look! in the sky

The bleak winds mutter morose

To the swift dark day.

They gather and threaten and scold,

They shiver and shriek in their rage.

They are ashen and icy and old—

Ah, bitter the passion of age!

Flee from them! haste—haste

Through the vengeful weather!

Lest your red blood chill

And your hearts stop still,

Crowd close together

And flee o'er the drear dead waste!

Down! down!

Out of a sky all brown

The dark storm stoops to shrivel the world
away.

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

With ribald winds he strips her,
With stinging sleet he whips her,
With envious frost he withers her green to
 gray.

Because she was gay and glad,
Beloved of many lovers, fruitful mother
Of many children crowding and killing each
 other;

Because she was wasteful mad,
Scattering and trampling her riches for
 death to smother,

Now shall she starve and freeze
And pray on her stiffened knees.

Now shall she helpless lie
And the powers of the air will mock her;
The spirits she dared defy
Will rend her and blind her and shock her.
With white, white snow they will bury her
 passion deep

Till it's dumb, till it's cold.

They will whistle and roar in their triumph,
 and orgies keep

Till her heart grows old.

They will put out her love-lit sun like the
 torch at a feast,

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

And with haughty carousals make wanton
his court in the east.

They will brush down the stars like white
feathers far blown on dark waves,
And the night will be black as they dance on
the ghost-thronged graves.

Haste! haste!

Your garments are torn, they are sheeted
with ice,

In your wind-loosed hair
The sharp sleet rattles.

Ye are hurled, chased
To the Winter's lair—

Ye have paid the price,
Ye have bled in her battles.

Now shelter your woe
And be still, be still!

Let the night-winds go
To their cave in the hill!

Let the dark clouds flee
Through the gates of the west,

Till the earth rides free
Who was sore oppressed.

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

For weary of orgies that ravage
Is Winter now.
From the heel of a tyrant savage
She lifts her brow.
Lo, the wrath of the storm is over,
And under a moon-white cover
Lies the world asleep.
So still, so pale—
Dance bravely, lest thou quail
And pause to weep.
Over the flower-soft snow
Still as the lost wind go
To open the gates of day.
Where watcheth yon lone pale star
Crimson and golden are
The curtains that shake and sway.
Ah lift them! look, through the rift
Comes the sun adrift!
He kindles the snow to fire,
He bids the dead earth aspire.
Ah dance! from the year's white grave
New blooms will blow.
Dance lightly, wistfully—save
The life below!
Softly! the world is still—

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

Hush thine errant will!
No longer the dream pursue!
Rest—rest, till the dream come true!
Wait! hope! be still!



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